

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5919

As Passed House:

June 20, 2001

Title: An act relating to the assessment of potential site locations for water storage projects.

Brief Description: Providing for the assessment of potential site locations for water storage projects.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Fraser, Honeyford and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 3/23/01, 3/29/01 [DP].

Second Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 6/20/01, 83-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows a watershed planning unit's assessment of water supply and use to include the identification of potential sites for water storage projects.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Mielke, Republican Vice Chair; B. Chandler, Delvin, Dunshee, Grant, Hunt, Kirby, Quall, Roach, Schoesler and Sump.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background:

The watershed planning laws enacted in 1997 and 1998 establish procedures and policies for initiating watershed planning at the local level. If certain local governments choose to initiate the planning for one or more watersheds they appoint a planning unit to do the planning. The watersheds are referred to as water resource inventory areas (WRIA's).

Under these laws, the planning unit must address water quantity issues in the WRIA's by conducting an assessment of water supply and use in the watershed and developing strategies for future use. The assessment must include strategies for increasing water supplies in the area in sufficient quantities to satisfy minimum instream flows for fish, to provide water for future out-of-stream uses for water and to ensure that adequate water supplies are available for agriculture, energy production, and population and economic growth under the requirements of the state's Growth Management Act. These strategies may include elements for water storage.

Summary of Bill:

The assessment of water supply and use conducted by a watershed planning unit may include the identification of potential sites for water storage projects. The sites may be for either large or small projects and may cover the full range of possible alternatives including off-channel storage, underground storage, the enlargement or enhancement of existing storage, and on-channel storage.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The bill allows watershed planning units to inventory potential water storage sites as part of their watershed study and plan. The goal of the bill is consistent with the Governor's water strategy, the report of the Water Storage Task Force, and current law that favors multi-purpose water storage projects over single purpose projects. Many see increased water storage as the primary solution to the state's water problems. Former mines may provide opportunities for storing water underground.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In favor): Senator Morton, prime sponsor; Keith Phillips, Department of Ecology; and Jim Halstrom, Washington Horticultural Association.